



ACCOKEEK  
FOUNDATION  
at Piscataway Park

## **An Observation by Wilton Corkern, October 6, 2006:**

Wednesday was a warm day. At 85 degrees, it was warm for any time, but this Wednesday was emphatically warm because this is the first week in October. I woke up knowing it would be one of those rare Autumn days when a boy should be fishing, not working. I went to work anyway, but by about 4:30, the boy in me had won. I grabbed the gear I keep in my office – and use not even two or three times a year – and headed for a secret fishing hole. It is a farm pond, surrounded by brambles and trees, and edged this time of year with a combination of grass, algae, and pond weeds. It has never been stocked, but I know there are fish in there. I have seen them and even caught a few of them. Actually, I have cast into that pond thousands of times over the years, but only rarely have I connected with a fish. Still, I try. And Wednesday was irresistible.

My equipment is nothing to brag about. (*Bass fishermen with Penn baitcasting reels, sparkling boats and big outboards should stop reading right now!*) I use a 6 ½ foot Eagle Claw fiberglass rod that I got when I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. My reel is a cheap Zebco “33.” Not the one I got in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade – that one’s in my attic for spare parts – but a replacement one I bought only about 20 years ago. My tackle box is from the mid 1960s, and most of its contents are, too. But somehow, none of that matters when the weather is unseasonably warm and the boy inside takes control.

I tied on a large yellow wire contraption with a rubber skirt called a spinner bait and tossed it to the middle of the pond. On my first cast, I had a strike. On my second cast, I had another strike. On my third cast, I snagged a large redbelly bream. Snagged is the proper term, too, since it was hooked in the gill, not the mouth. A fun fish to catch. I threw it back and cast again. This time another strike and another fish, a half-pound largemouth bass, also hooked in the gill. After several more casts and a couple of missed strikes, I decided to switch lures. This time I tied on a brown Rapala minnow, a top water lure with two treble hooks. This lure is truly a relic of the ‘60s. I remember the day I bought it in 1968, at a store in Glen Bernie, on the eve of a two-day fishing spree with a Navy buddy of mine who was stationed at Fort Meade. It has a few scars now, but the hooks are still sharp.

Again, on my first cast, a strike! I took a deep breath and tried to remember the technique for this lure: Cast. Then wait about a half-a-minute while the lure floats motionless. Keep the line taught, and then give a sharp tug, which takes the lure under water. Reel a few feet and then let it float back to the surface. Wait for another 30 seconds or so. Blam! A big one, but I missed. Then, a bass. This one just over a pound, a keeper if I were so inclined. And so it went for an hour. Sometimes I could watch as a green mass rose slowly to the surface, rolled over to show a yellowish underbelly, and then swam away. Sometimes I had no warning at all; just a smash and a fight. I caught and released a half-dozen largemouth bass, and I had at least a dozen more strikes that I couldn’t catch. The fish were all relatively small, but what an afternoon! I won’t soon forget it.

An old friend of mine used to say that if a man could spend an hour a day fishing, he’d live forever. I don’t know about that, but I surely have felt younger these last couple of days.